THE AFFECT THEORY READER

Edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Partway through the introduction to this collection, it will become clear why it was significant that I read Greg's final draft while I was cramped on the floor of a late train during a long and crowded commute. I write these words from a new home, having embarked on an experiment to disrupt some old habits and hopefully allow more time to register "the stretching."

By sheer coincidence, during the final stages of this project both Greg and I moved house on opposite sides of the world in the very same week. This is just one of the sweet synergies and sympathies we have shared over the years that I hope will continue long after this publication. It is Greg's venerable alacrity as a reader that makes me so delighted that *a book* now stands as an archive of the hope and sustenance I have gained from a defining intellectual friendship. Greg's brilliant mind, graceful words, and contagious hospitality have made this a far greater achievement than I could have imagined.

Our contributors have been more than generous in offering words, affirmation, and patience during the long gestation of this collection. We thank them for believing in us and persisting through the many stages—and hope they enjoy the result.

Two reviewers of the manuscript provided extensive and engaged feedback that helped us immensely. We thank them for their time and encouragement, knowing that the collection is stronger for their suggestions. That we have a manuscript at all is due to the brilliant editorial work of Bryan Behrenshausen, who has been a complete pleasure to work with. We also thank Ken Wissoker for his enthusiasm and advice from the very beginning, and Mandy Earley for guidance in the later stages.

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Elspeth Probyn is the main reason I became interested in affect, and it is her remarkable ability to *enthuse* that allowed me to write these words and many more for a living. I am forever grateful. For showing me how to think and write bravely, I also thank Eve Sedgwick, Katie Stewart, Lauren Berlant, Ros Gill, Sara Ahmed, Genevieve Bell, Meaghan Morris, and Catherine Driscoll.

Finally, my deepest thanks go to Jason Wilson, who has taught me the most important lesson about affect: follow your heart.

Melissa Gregg

A register of speeds and slownesses, relations of motion and rest: this is what Deleuze said of Spinoza's philosophy with its special attention to a body's affects. A book is also, as it turns out, very much all about motion and rest, speed and slowness. From start to finish, Melissa has truly been a force of nature, a great gust of wind, and never once flagged through the duration of this project. I have just tried to keep up with her pace, her eminently practical and affective voice, her generosity of spirit. Across longitudes and latitudes, we found a rhythm (several actually) and a mutual capacity for the modes of composition that go into making a book, a book of affect and affects. Or that remains our hope.

And "hope" is in the air as I write these words. While Melissa composed her acknowledgments in the cramped space of a late-night train from Sydney, I write mine within another kind of cramped space, another kind of long, dark train—it is the end of eight years of the Bush-Cheney administration here in the United States. At this very moment, we are on the eve (literally, tomorrow) of the inauguration of Barack Obama. It is difficult to register this change as a shuttling of mere incremental affective intensities. After eight years that have only felt more and more closed, the potential for a world, *this* world, to be otherwise—to open elsewhere, anywhere—is palpable. So much, too much. Promise. We do not yet know. But there is a collective hope, and that's a start—an affective/affectionate start.

This book, for me, began over twenty-five years ago in Clarion, Pennsylvania, when Stan Denski mailed to me an essay by Lawrence Grossberg. In the years since, I have been fortunate to be able to count Stan and Larry as among my dearest friends. It would be impossible for me to sum up what Larry Grossberg's ongoing work has meant to me (I can only keep on writing as small recompense). Likewise, I am tremendously indebted to the inspired work of, as well as my correspondences with, Meaghan Morris, Brian Massumi, Karen Ocana, Gil Rodman, Greg Wise, Ben Anderson, Michael Gardiner, Ben Highmore, Charley Stivale, and Nigel Thrift. Thanks also go to my home institution of Millersville University, where I have been supported while being left free to follow wherever, whatever I desire: in my research and in the classroom. A special shout-out goes to my Lancaster-York best pal Mike Jarrett, both a remarkable sounding board for theories of every stripe and my constant supplier of sounds.

Last, and never least, I thank Jackie and Kendall. Jackie has been around for all of it, affect through and through.

Gregory J. Seigworth

AN INVENTORY OF SHIMMERS

Gregory J. Seigworth & Melissa Gregg

How to begin when, after all, there is no pure or somehow originary state for affect? Affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability. Indeed, affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations.

Affect is in many ways synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*. The term "force," however, can be a bit of a misnomer since affect need not be especially forceful (although sometimes, as in the psychoanalytic study of trauma, it is). In fact, it is quite likely that affect more often transpires within and across the subtlest of shuttling intensities: all the minuscule or molecular events of the unnoticed. The ordinary and its extra-. Affect is born in *in-between-ness* and resides as accumulative *beside-ness*. Affect can be understood then as a gradient of bodily capacity—a supple incrementalism of ever-modulating force-relations—that rises and falls not only along various rhythms and modalities of encounter but also through the troughs and sieves of sensation and sensibility, an incrementalism that coincides with belonging to comportments of matter of virtually any and every sort. Hence, affect's always immanent capacity for extending further still: both into and out of the interstices of the inorganic and non-living, the intracellular divulgences of sinew, tissue, and gut economies, and the vaporous evanescences of the incorporeal (events, atmospheres, feeling-tones). At once intimate and impersonal, affect *accumulates* across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between "bodies" (bodies defined not by an outer skin-envelope or other surface boundary but by their potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect). Bindings and unbindings, becomings and un-becomings, jarring disorientations and rhythmic attunements. Affect marks a body's *belonging* to a world of encounters or; a world's belonging to a body of encounters but also, in *non-belonging*, through all those far sadder (de)compositions of mutual in-compossibilities. Always there are ambiguous or "mixed" encounters that impinge and extrude for worse and for better, but (most usually) in-between.

In this ever-gathering accretion of force-relations (or, conversely, in the peeling or wearing away of such sedimentations) lie the real powers of affect, affect as potential: a body's *capacity* to affect and to be affected. How does a body, marked in its duration by these various encounters with mixed forces, come to shift its affections (its being-affected) into action (capacity to affect)? Sigmund Freud once claimed, in his very earliest project, that affect does not so much reflect or think; affect acts (1966: 357–59). However, Freud also believed that these passages of affect persist in immediate adjacency to the movements of thought: close enough that sensate tendrils constantly extend between unconscious (or, better, non-conscious) affect and conscious thought. In practice, then, affect and cognition are never fully separable—if for no other reason than that thought is itself a body, embodied. Cast forward by its open-ended in-between-ness, affect is integral to a body's perpetual *becoming* (always becoming otherwise, however subtly, than what it already is), pulled beyond its seeming surface-boundedness by way of its relation to, indeed its composition through, the forces of encounter. With affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself—webbed in its relations—until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter.

In what undoubtedly has become one of the most oft-cited quotations concerning affect, Baruch Spinoza maintained, "No one has yet determined what the body can do" (1959: 87). Two key aspects are immediately worth emphasizing, or re-emphasizing, here: first, the capacity of a body is never defined by a body alone but is always aided and abetted by, and dovetails with, the field or context of its force-relations; and second, the "not yet" of "knowing the body" is still very much with us more than 330 years after Spinoza composed his *Ethics*. But, as Spinoza recognized, this issue is never the generic figuring of "the body" (any body) but, much more singularly, endeavoring to configure *a* body and its affects/affectedness, its ongoing affectual composition of *a* world, the *this-ness* of a world and a body.

The essays of this collection are, each in their own way, an attempt to address this "yet-ness" of a body's affectual doings and undoings. Each essay presents its own account of encounters with forces and passages of intensity that bear out, while occasionally leaving bare, the singularly and intimately impersonal—even sub-personal and pre-personal—folds of belonging (or non-belonging) to a world. That is the unceasing challenge presented by Spinoza's "not yet," conveying a sense of urgency that transforms the matter and matterings of affect into an ethical, aesthetic, and political task all at once. But then, of course, Spinoza must have also understood that affect's "not yet" was never really supposed to find any ultimate resolution. No one will ever finally exclaim: "So, there it is: now, we know all that a body can do! Let's call it a day." It is this Spinozist imperative, ever renewed by the "not yet" knowing of affective doing, that drives affect—as well as those theories that attempt to negotiate the formative powers of affect—forward toward the next encounter of forces, and the next, and the next, and the next . . .

It would be, though, a rather serious misrepresentation of contemporary theories of affect if we were to understand each of these "not yets" and their "nexts" as moving forward in some kind of integrated lockstep. There is no single, generalizable theory of affect: not yet, and (thankfully) there never will be. If anything, it is more tempting to imagine that there can only ever

be infinitely multiple iterations of affect and theories of affect: theories as diverse and singularly delineated as their own highly particular encounters with bodies, affects, worlds. (Isn't theory—any theory with or without a capital T—supposed to work this way? Operating with a certain modest methodological vitality rather than impressing itself upon a wiggling world like a snap-on grid of shape-setting interpretability?)[1] But such a state of affairs might also go some distance toward explaining why first encounters with theories of affect might feel like a momentary (sometimes more permanent) methodological and conceptual free fall. Almost all of the tried-and-true handholds and footholds for so much critical-cultural-philosophical inquiry and for theory—subject/object, representation and meaning, rationality, consciousness, time and space, inside/outside, human/nonhuman, identity, structure, background/foreground, and so forth—become decidedly less sure and more nonsequential (any notion of strict "determination" or directly linear cause and effect goes out the window too). Because affect emerges out of muddy, unmediated relatedness and not in some dialectical reconciliation of cleanly oppositional elements or primary units, it makes easy compartmentalisms give way to thresholds and tensions, blends and blurs. As Brian Massumi (2002) has emphasized, approaches to affect would feel a great deal less like a free fall if our most familiar modes of inquiry had begun with movement rather than stasis, with process always underway rather than position taken.

It is no wonder too that when theories have dared to provide even a tentative account of affect, they have sometimes been viewed as naïvely or romantically wandering too far out into the groundlessness of a world's or a body's myriad inter-implications, letting themselves get lost in an over-abundance of swarming, sliding differences: chasing tiny firefly intensities that flicker faintly in the night, registering those resonances that vibrate, subtle to seismic, under the flat wash of broad daylight, dramatizing (indeed, for the unconvinced, *over*-dramatizing) what so often passes beneath mention. But, as our contributors will show, affect's impinging/extruded belonging to worlds, bodies, and their in-betweens—affect in its immanence—signals the very promise of affect theory too: casting illumination upon the "not yet" of a body's doing, casting a line along the hopeful (though also fearful) cusp of an emergent futurity, casting its lot with the infinitely connectable, impersonal, and contagious belongings to *this* world.

Affectual Orientations

So, what can an affect theory do? Unquestionably, there has been an increased interest in various manifestations/conceptualizations of affect—as can be found in a growing number of essays and books (such as this one), as well as conference themes, special journal issues, symposia, and so forth. But it would be impossible to believe that these diverse renderings of affect can somehow be resolved into a tidy picture. There is no single unwavering line that might unfurl toward or around affect and its singularities, let alone its theories: only swerves and knottings, perhaps a few marked and unremarked intersections as well as those unforeseen crosshatchings of articulations yet to be made, refastened, or unmade. Traveling at varying tempos and durations within specific fields of inquiry while also slipping past even the most steadfast of disciplinary boundaries (for example, the affective interface of neurology and architecture, anyone?), the concept of "affect" has gradually accrued a sweeping assortment of philosophical/psychological/physiological underpinnings, critical vocabularies, and ontological pathways, and, thus, can be (and has been) turned toward all manner of political/pragmatic/performative ends. Perhaps one of the surest things that can be said of both affect and its theorization is that they will exceed, always exceed the context of their emergence, as the excess of ongoing process.

Undoubtedly the watershed moment for the most recent resurgence of interest and intrigue regarding affect and theories of affect came in 1995 when two essays—one by Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank ("Shame in the Cybernetic Fold") and one by Brian Massumi ("The Autonomy of Affect")—were published. Not only has the theoretical content of these particular works proven to be invigorating (combining affect's displacement of the centrality of cognition with affect theory's own displacement of debates over the centrality of structuralism and poststructuralism) but the voice and stylistics of their writings—where affect serves as force and form—have likewise contributed to their wide circulation and considerable influence in the years since. These two essays from 1995, along with subsequent work undertaken by their authors, have given substantial shape to the two dominant vectors of affect study in the humanities: Silvan Tomkins's psychobiology of differential affects (1962) (Sedgwick and Frank) and Gilles Deleuze's Spinozist ethology of bodily capacities (1988a) (Massumi). With Tomkins, affect follows a quasi-Darwinian "innate-ist" bent toward matters of evolutionary hardwiring. But these wires are by no means fully insulated nor do they

terminate with the brain or flesh; instead they spark and fray just enough to transduce those influences borne along by the ambient irradiation of social relations. Meanwhile, Deleuze's Spinozan route locates affect in the midst of things and relations (in immanence) and, then, in the complex assemblages that come to compose bodies and worlds simultaneously. There is, then, a certain sense of reverse flow between these lines of inquiry—a certain inside-out/outside-in difference in directionality: affect as the prime "interest" motivator that comes to put the drive in bodily drives (Tomkins); affect as an entire, vital, and modulating field of myriad becomings across human and nonhuman (Deleuze). While there is no pretending that these two vectors of affect theory could ever be easily or fully reconciled, they can be made to interpenetrate at particular points and to resonate (see, in particular, the work of Gibbs, Probyn, and Watkins in this volume).

But there are far more than just two angles onto affect's theorization. For now (and only for now), we can tentatively lay out, as a set of necessarily brief and blurry snapshots, eight of the main orientations that undulate and sometimes overlap in their approaches to affect. Each of these regions of investigation—enumerated for convenience's sake and in no particular order —highlights a slightly different set of concerns, often reflected in their initiating premises, the endpoints of their aims, or both.

1 One approach is found in the sometimes archaic and often occulted practices of human/nonhuman nature as intimately interlaced, including phenomenologies and post-phenomenologies of embodiment as well as investigations into a body's incorporative capacities for scaffolding and extension (Vivian Sobchack, Don Ihde, Michel Henry, Laura Marks, Mark Hansen, and others).
2 Another is located along an intertwined line to the first item: in the more recent but, in some ways, no less occulted (though better-funded) assemblages of the human/machine/inorganic such as cybernetics, the neurosciences (of matter, of distributed agency, of emotion/sensation, and so on), ongoing research in artificial intelligence, robotics, and bio-informatics/bio-engineering (where life technologies work increasingly to smudge the affectional line between the living and the non-living).
3 The third is found in certain nonhumanist, ofttimes subterranean, and generally non-Cartesian traditions in philosophy, usually linking the movements of matter with a processual incorporeality (Spinozism): particularly as found in those contemporary approaches that try to move beyond various gendered and other cultural limitations in philosophy, whether in feminist work (Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, Genevieve Lloyd, and Moira Gatens), or in Italian autonomism (Paolo Virno or Maurizio Lazzaratto), or in philosophically inflected cultural studies (Lawrence Grossberg, Meaghan Morris, Brian Massumi), or in political philosophy (Giorgio Agamben and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri).
4 The fourth occurs in certain lines of psychological and psychoanalytic inquiry where a relatively unabashed biologism remains co-creatively open to ongoing impingements and pressures from intersubjective and interobjective systems of social desiring (early Sigmund Freud, Silvan Tomkins, Daniel Stern, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, and so forth). It is similar to the third item above, although generally more prone—by way of disciplinary expectations—to a categorical naming of affects and also quite likely to provide operationally defined contours for a particular range of affects, with ultimate aims that are often more human-centered.
5 The fifth is found in the regularly hidden-in-plain-sight politically engaged work—perhaps most often undertaken by feminists, queer theorists, disability activists, and subaltern peoples living under the thumb of a normativizing power—that attends to the hard and fast materialities, as well as the fleeting and flowing ephemera, of the daily and the workaday, of everyday and every-night life, and of "experience" (understood in ways far more collective and "external" rather than individual and interior), where persistent, repetitious practices of power can simultaneously provide a body (or, better, collectivized bodies) with predicaments and potentials for realizing a world that subsists within and exceeds the horizons and boundaries of the norm.
6 The sixth can be seen in various (often humanities-related) attempts to turn away from the much-heralded "linguistic turn" in the latter half of the twentieth century—from cultural anthropology to geography to communication and cultural studies to performance-based art practices to literary theory—and often toward work increasingly influenced by the quantum, neuro-, and cognitive sciences, especially far-from-equilibrium physics (see the second item above); but also by returning to and reactivating work that had been taking place well before and alongside the linguistic turn and its attendant social constructionisms. Here we could note examples such as Raymond Williams's "structure of feeling," Frantz Fanon's "third person consciousness," Walter Benjamin's non-sensual mimesis, Susanne Langer's "open ambient," and

John Dewey's pragmatic idealities. This turn to affect theory is sometimes focused on understanding how the "outside" realms of the pre-/extra-/para-linguistic intersect with the "lower" or proximal senses (such as touch, taste, smell, rhythm and motion-sense, or, alternately/ultimately, the autonomic nervous system) while also arguing for a much wider definition for the social or cultural. Frequently this work focuses on those ethico-aesthetic spaces that are opened up (or shut down) by a widely disparate assortment of affective encounters with, for example, new technological lures, infants, music, dance, and other more non-discursive arts (particularly architecture), animals (companion or not), and so on.

7 The seventh appears in critical discourses of the emotions (and histories of the emotions) that have progressively left behind the interiorized self or subjectivity (thus, following from the third item, how to think or feel in an era "post"-cogito?) to unfold regimes of expressivity that are tied much more to resonant worldings and diffusions of feeling/passions—often including atmospheres of sociality, crowd behaviors, contagions of feeling, matters of belonging (for example, the recent resurgence of interest in Gabriel Tarde) and a range of postcolonial, hybridized, and migrant voices that forcefully question the privilege and stability of individualized actants possessing self-derived agency and solely private emotions within a scene or environment. How might emotion—taking on then decidedly affectual qualities—be reconsidered without requiring place-positions for subject and object as the first condition (see, for example, Terada 2001)?

8 The eighth approach is located in practices of science and science studies themselves, particularly work that embraces pluralist approaches to materialism (quite often threaded through the revivification of Alfred North Whitehead's writings); hence, scientific practices that never act to eliminate the element of wonder or the sheer mangle of ontological relatedness but, in Isabelle Stengers's words, "make present, vivid and mattering, the imbroglio, perplexity and messiness of a worldly world, a world where we, our ideas and power relations, are not alone, were never alone, will never be alone" (2007, 9). Here affect is the hinge where mutable matter and wonder (ofttimes densely intermingled with world-weary dread too) perpetually tumble into each other.

Again, this is by no means a fully comprehensive or neatly contoured accounting of the many actual and yet to be realized or imagined convergences and divergences undertaken by contemporary theories of affect. There will always be more; undoubtedly there *are* more—as other means of inquiry are invented to account for the relational capacities that belong to the doings of bodies or are conjured by the world-belongingness that gives rise to a body's doing. Already moving across and beneath nearly all of these strands, one need only consider, for example, the intellectually and politically fertile work (maybe not always explicitly invoking affect or theories of affect but drawing from them nonetheless) of Donna Haraway, Erin Manning, William Connolly, J. K. Gibson-Graham, Lisa Blackman, John Protevi, Sianne Ngai, Ghassan Hage, Jane Bennett, Paul Gilroy, Karen Barad, Steven Shaviro, Elizabeth Wilson, Alphonso Lingis, and Michael Taussig. For now anyway, these eight affectual orientations offer a useful enough sketch of a framework so that we can tease out some of the key resonances among our contributors' concerns in the book that follows.

Bloom-Spaces: Promise and Threat

If the individual essays of this volume are momentarily united, it is in their collectively singular attempts to address what transpires in the affective bloom-space of an ever-processual materiality. What Raymond Williams defined as the necessary critical task of always "moving beyond one after another 'materialism'" (1980, 122) chimes with Isabelle Stengers's words above. The affective qualities of this adjacent but incorporeal bloom-space are figured in a variety of ways by our contributors: as excess, as autonomous, as impersonal, as the ineffable, as the ongoingness of process, as pedagogico-aesthetic, as virtual, as shareable (mimetic), as sticky, as collective, as contingency, as threshold or conversion point, as immanence of potential (futurity), as the open, as a vibrant incoherence that circulates about zones of cliché and convention, as a gathering place of accumulative dispositions. Each of these figurations, in its own way, names that Spinozist "not yet" of affect as its "promise"—stated most forthrightly by Sara Ahmed, Ben Anderson, and Lauren Berlant (for her, a "cluster of promises") but implicit among other of our contributors too. (For one very complementary angle, see "hope" [as promise] in Zournazi 2002.)

At the same time, this promise of affect and its generative relay into affect theory must also acknowledge, in the not yet of never-quite-knowing, that there are no ultimate or final guarantees—political, ethical, aesthetic, pedagogic, and otherwise—that capacities to affect and to be affected will yield an

actualized next or new that is somehow better than "now." Such seeming moments of promise can just as readily come to deliver something worse. This state of affairs is emphasized by Lawrence Grossberg when he discusses "received" modernity and alternate, co-existing modernities, by Brian Massumi addressing "threat" in the affective birth of the future, and by Patricia Clough in her analysis of capital's entanglements with matter's affective capacities. Thus, in the affective bloom of a processual materialism, one of the most pressing questions faced by affect theory becomes "Is that a promise or a threat?" No surprise: any answer quite often encompasses both at the same time (hence Berlant's "cruel optimism").

As much as we sometimes might want to believe that affect is highly *invested* in us and with somehow magically providing for a better tomorrow, as if affect were always already sutured into a progressive or liberatory politics or at least the marrow of our best angels, as if affect were somehow producing always better states of being and belonging—affect instead bears an intense and thoroughly immanent neutrality. Maybe this is one reason why, in his penultimate lectures collected as *The Neutral,* Roland Barthes calls for "a hyperconsciousness of the affective minimum, of the microscopic fragment of emotion . . . which implies an extreme changeability of affective moments, a rapid modification, into shimmer" (2005, 101). The neutral, for Barthes, is not synonymous in the least with ready acquiescence, political neutrality, a lapse into grayness; in short, it does not imply a well-nurtured indifference to the present, to existing conditions. Instead, the neutral works to "outplay the paradigm" of oppositions and negations by referring to "intense, strong, unprecedented states" that elude easy polarities and contradictions while also guarding against the accidental consolidation of the very meaning that the Neutral (as "ardent, burning activity") seeks to dissolve (7). Likewise, the neutral is not bound to the formed/formal matters of space or time nor has it anything to do with the linearizing axes and abrupt angles of structuralism, but "only intervals, only the relation between two moments, two spaces or objects" (146–47). In these in-betweens or blooming intervals, intensities are continually divulged in the supple relations between a world's or a body's interleavings and their vectors of gradience—where gradient is "progressive accentuation, spatial or temporal, in the intensive dimensions [concentration, speed] of a stimulus [gradient of odor, gradient of luminosity] or of a comportment [gradient of goal]" (196). Analyses would no longer proceed, Barthes proposed, by way of the binaries of structuralism ("yes/no"), their slippages, inversions, convolutions, but instead must begin—as with "plus/minus"—to "register a form that is rarely taken into account: the stretching" (196–97). It becomes then a matter of accounting for the progressive accentuation (plus/minus) of intensities, their incremental shimmer: the stretching of process underway, not position taken.

From the midst of such stretching, the neutral served as Barthes's attempt to forge an ethics or "discourse of the 'lateral choice'" or, as he went on to say, this approach afforded him "a free manner—to be looking for my own style of being-present to the struggles of my time" (8). What should follow as critical practice, Barthes argued, is a neutrally inflected, immanent *pathos* or "patho-logy" that would be an "inventory of shimmers, of nuances, of states, of changes (*pathè*)" as they gather into "affectivity, sensibility, sentiment," and come to serve as "the passion for difference" (77). Here affect theory is, at one level, an "inventory of shimmers" while, upon another register, it is a matter of affectual composition (in a couple of senses of the word "composition"—as an ontology always coming to formation but also, more prosaically, as creative/writerly task). This is a passion for differences as continuous, shimmering gradations of intensities. Making an inventory (of singularities). And in the interval, is the stretching: unfolding a patho-logy (of "not yets").[2]

Bruno Latour also discovered what he too calls "a patho-logical definition of [a] body"—although without any reference to Roland Barthes—when, at a conference, he asked everyone to write down the antonym of the word "body." Of all the antonyms (apart from the "predictable and amusing ones like 'antibody' or 'nobody'"), the ones that Latour found most intriguing were "unaffected" and "death" (2004, 205). He surmises: "If the opposite of being a body is dead [and] there is no life apart from the body . . . [then] to have a body is to learn to be affected, meaning 'effectuated,' moved, put into motion by other entities, humans or nonhumans. If you are not engaged in this learning, you become insensitive, dumb, you drop dead" (205). The body becomes less about its nature as bounded substance or eternal essence and more about the body "as an interface that becomes more and more describable when it learns to be affected by many more elements" (205). Ironically, while Barthes spoke of the slope of affective intensities as "progressive accentuation," then alluding briefly to how one might recognize these near-inconspicuous affects in everyday encounters with such things as gradients of odors or of luminosity, Latour takes the former, quite literally, for his own example of a body's becoming effectuated. In an extended elaboration, Latour considers specifically how one becomes "a nose" (how noses are trained for work in the perfume industry).

As one might imagine, what Latour goes on to outline is the absolute

co-extension and interpenetration of olfactory science, perfume industry, subject-nose, chemical components of smell molecules, odor names, and training sessions. Through it all, there is no clear delineation of subject/object, no easily sustained interior/exterior world in such a processual engagement of becoming a nose. In the accumulation of gradient tweakings, one finds the simultaneous delivery of a bodily capacity and a world of sometimes near-infinitesimal difference: nurturing differences through affective relay into perpetually finer-grained (and concurrently enlarged) postures or comportments until there are only articulations of a world in its expressiveness: expressions that are only ever the interval between sensings or *the stretching* of this sensuous interval that comes to progressively produce (when successful) a passion for difference, where the patho-logy of a body meets the pedagogy of an affective world. In fact, as much as anything, perhaps that is what such a "neutral" bloom-space offers: the patho-logy of a body intersecting with the pedagogy of an affective world. As Ben Highmore suggests, at the end of his essay on taste in this collection, this is "the transformation of ethos through experiments in living. Here politics is a form of experiential pedagogy, of constantly submitting your sensorium to new sensual worlds that sit uncomfortably within your ethos. There is hope here. . . ."

We would maintain that affect theories, whatever their multiple trajectories, must persistently work to invent or invite such a "patho-logy" into their own singular instantiations—not only as inventory (though, heaven knows, sometimes that can be work enough) but also as a generative, pedagogic nudge aimed toward a body's becoming an ever more worldly sensitive interface, toward a style of being present to the struggles of our time. Or, as Lauren Berlant phrases it in her essay, considering those moments when one briefly slips free of the cruelty of normative optimism: how "the substitution of habituated indifference with a spreading pleasure might open up a wedge into an alternative ethics of living, or not." Maybe that's the "for-now" promise of affect theory's "not yet," its habitually rhythmic (or near rhythmic) undertaking: endeavoring to locate that propitious moment when the stretching of (or tiniest tear in) bloom-space could precipitate something more than incremental. If only. Affect as promise: increases in capacities to act (expansions in affectability: both to affect and to be affected), the start of "being-capable" (Uexküll, quoted in Agamben 2004, 51), resonant affinities of body and world, being open to more life or more to life (Massumi 2002). Or again not. As Lauren Berlant indicates in her essay in this volume, there is

also the lingering, numbing downside that, even though a propitious moment "*could* become otherwise, . . . shifts in affective atmosphere are not equal to changing the world" (emphasis added).

Conversely then, affect can also serve as a leading visceral indicator of potent threat. Brian Massumi's essay in this volume states: "Understand the political ontology of threat requires returning thought to [the] affective twilight zone . . . that bustling zone of indistinction." Zone of indistinction equals the neutral in its state of most brute and potentializing indifference. Under the conditions of a political ontology of threat, a pedagogic world and patho-logical body find themselves at an impasse and perhaps begin to contract or retract their powers of affectivity/affectability. Suspend, wither, maybe die.[3] But this split—promise or threat—is *rarely* so stark. Take, for instance, Patricia Clough's argument—the most unflinching essay of this collection—which provides more than sufficient concern for the ways that the word "rarely" is quickly becoming "more frequently"—in the real subsumption of "life itself" by biomedia and in "the sovereign right to kill in the context of biopolitics." Despite this, Clough finds a wedge, a small "and yet." Maybe the neutral can always be colored more hopefully. It has to be (after all, affect speaks in the voice of an imperative). And so Clough ends, albeit in what feels like a gasp for a tiny crack of airspace, by writing that "there is always a chance for something else, unexpected, new." Who doesn't want to believe that we live in a world ceaselessly recomposing itself in the unforeseen passages through the best of all possible impasses?

Within these mixed capacities of the in-between, as undulations in expansions and contractions of affectability arrive almost simultaneously or in close-enough alternation, something emerges, overspills, exceeds: *a form of relation* as a rhythm, a fold, a timing, a habit, a contour, or a shape comes to mark the passages of intensities (whether dimming or accentuating) in body-to-body/world-body mutual imbrication.[4] It is this relationality—often working, as Anna Gibbs clearly shows in her contribution, by mimetic means—that persists, in adjacency and duration, alongside the affects and bodies that gather up in motley, always more-than-human collectivity. This is the topography most widely shared by theories of affect, threaded through their myriad ways of constructing an inventory (consider here, for example, Megan Watkins's essay on debates over pedagogic theories and the role played by the accumulation of affect as "dispositional tendency") as well as in their own diffuse patho-logies. It is through these durational indices of shapes, timings, rhythms, folds, and contours that the contributors to this

volume begin to give name (a variety of different names actually) to the singular affectual bloom-spaces of a processually oriented materialism.

No wonder then that, in theory, the "what" of affect often gives way to matters of "how" in the rhythm or angle of approach: thus, why a great many theories of affect do not sweat the construction of any elaborate step-by-step methodology much at all, but rather come to fret the presentation or the style of presentation, the style of being present, more than anything else. If Sara Ahmed's essay leads off our collection, it is because her attention to the "hap" (the contingency or potential in what she calls the "messiness of the experiential") of happiness is precisely the entry into the neutral bloom-space that affect theory is forever shifting into and out of, incrementally and intensely. She writes that "we may walk into the room and 'feel the atmosphere,' but what we may feel depends on the angle of our arrival. Or we might say that the atmosphere is already angled; it is always felt from a specific point. The pedagogic encounter is full of angles." This is the kind of aesthetically inflected moment that underlies almost any theoretical orientation toward affect. Not aesthetics in its "dominant mode" where, as Ben Highmore argues in his essay, it both moralizes and takes "satisfaction in the end form of a process"; rather this decidedly affect-driven aesthetics is interested "in the messy *informe* of the ongoing-ness of process." How to enter *that* room, suddenly feeling the angles already inhabiting *this* bloom-space. And then to look for a means to articulate, to compose a singularizing aesthetic that captures both the stretchy-processual and the inherently sticky pragmatics of right now, right here. How also to register the intensity of difference in writing, and yet to relay this difference in ways that can be felt, shared? Referencing the Tomkins-inspired work of Sedgwick and Frank, Elspeth Probyn in her essay points to how a "general gesture to Affect won't do the trick. If we want to invigorate our concepts, we need to follow through on what different affects do, at different levels. The point needs to be stressed: different affects make us feel, write, think, and act in different ways." This engagement of affect and aesthetics is more a matter of "manner" than of essence: "not *what* something is, but how it is—or, more precisely, *how* it affects, and how it is affected by, other things" (Shaviro 2007, 8). Thus, this "how" of an aesthetics of affect becomes one way to bridge from "not yet" to the "next." For now. But without advance guarantees.

The political dimensions of affect generally proceed through or persist immediately alongside its aesthetics, an ethico-aesthetics of a body's capacity for becoming sensitive to the "manner" of a world: finding (or not) the coordinating rhythms that precipitate newness or change while also holding close to the often shimmering (twinkling/fading, vibrant/dull) continuities that pass in the slim interval between "*how* to affect" and "*how* to be affected." In their analysis of the political stakes raised by Australia's "red ship" refugee event, Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie neatly illustrate the ethico-aesthetic paradigm and its consequences for affect theory in precisely the ways that we have been outlining here. It is at once a twin maneuver of inventory ("the infinity of little affective events that make up our everyday lives") and of durational patho-logy (the development of new "regimes of sensation"). Drawing primarily on Félix Guattari's writings, Bertlesen and Murphie set forth their particular experiential pedagogy: "to develop a creative responsibility for modes of living *as they come into being*." Such is the open-ended ethos of their invocation of "the refrain" and its politically inflected gathering together of modes of living in an impurely humane (all too human and always more than human) sense of collectivity or belonging: the vital "more" to life, simultaneously right now and "not yet."

This same sense of the affectively, impurely human—the point where concerns of the all too human meet the always more than human—guides Steven Brown's and Ian Tucker's approach to the management of psychiatric relations and regularly prescribed psychoactive medications. What they find, by means of affect theory, is a way of articulating the experience of a patient and the complexities of the healthcare system (as "dispositif" or apparatus) without collapsing back into humanism. Brown and Tucker describe affect as providing them with "a continuous gestalt switch, where foreground and background, experience and dispositif alternate. . . . An attention to affect allows us to propose that persons differ from other creatures and things only quantitatively, by the number and complexity of the planes of experience that intersect, and intensively, through the particular connections and engagements that the human body is capable of supporting." Their notion of "a continuous gestalt switch" is a rather nice alternative phrasing for what transpires when the patho-logy of a body intersects with the pedagogy of an affective world (as they mutually constitute a rhythm, contour, shape, timing).

For her part, Anna Gibbs in her essay will invoke this gestalt switch as a "duplicity that necessitates an oscillation between two perspectives . . . [between] a certain strategic humanism viewed through the optic of representation that focuses on the culturally plastic and historically changing forms of subjectivity . . . [and] the world of 'nonlocal,' asubjective becomings in which these forms appear simply as momentary traces of other movements."

In finding the durational index by which foreground and background oscillate in sympathetic or mimetic rhythm, a motley more-than-human collectivity (as dispositif) shimmers into view alongside the multiple planes of experience (as embodied subjectivity). Thus, when Brown and Tucker later turn to their notion of "intermediary concepts," it is in order to steady and sustain this view long enough to peer into the affective dimensions of the ineffable and extract a prudent singularity, one fitted to the narrowly inhabitable margin (although as full of angles as any patient-body-world monad would be) that barely separates "how to affect" from "how to be affected." Affect's contribution to the empirical unfolds as an aesthetic or art of dosages: experiment and experience. Feel the angles and rhythms at the interface of bodies and worlds.

Whereas Brown and Tucker focus on closely and modestly tailoring the "how" of affect to the oscillatory co-production of psychiatric patient and disciplinary apparatus, Nigel Thrift in his essay extrudes the "how" of affect directly out of the other, decidedly more immodest side of this formulation. Describing the near endless proliferation of worlds-within-worlds and worlds-upon-worlds as well as the growing extimacies (public intimacies) of subjectivity, Thrift enthuses over the potential countertendencies and momentums unleashed through "the establishment of human-nonhuman fields of captivation." Not so accidentally, these aesthetic qualities of everyday life in early twenty-first-century capitalism sound eerily reminiscent of Clough's excavation of the contemporary intertwinings of biomedia and biopolitics—where "the boundaries between alive and not alive and material and immaterial have become increasingly blurred, so that what is considered as alive can become thing-like and what was considered as dead is able to show signs of life" (Thrift). Except what Clough finds by following the fates of affect down to those biopolitical and bioscientific substrates operating so very deeply within the pulsings of "life itself," Thrift locates everywhere already on eager surface-display in capitalism's "worldings." In this infectious generating of new environments for experience (simultaneously real and ideal), there is a constantly re-amplifying set of refractions, according to Thrift, "[where] every surface communicates," which, in the process, works to produce "new kinds of cultural nerve, if you like, which build extra facets of 'you.'" Eschewing the critical, near knee-jerk impulse that immediately cries out against capitalist totalitarianism and life-world domination, Thrift wonders instead about the ways that these "series of overlapping affective fields" might serve as the site for counterpractices of aesthetic and political modulation. It is, he knows, a rhythmic matter (and manner) of tipping a worlding's affective bloom-space into the more lateral stretch of the neutral, toward the patho-logical promise (and threat) of right now and not yet: the promise that the next set of encounters and the "manner" in which we undertake them could always guarantee more.

This might be the one guarantee that affect theory offers with some certainty: what Ben Anderson maintains is affect's "perpetually deferred promise on the horizon of cultural theory," a horizon that is not "stable ground or excessive outside" but offers the neutral lateralization of one after another materialism of the processual in-between of bodies/bodyings and world(ing)s. This inextricability of affect's promise and peril is, as we have tried to highlight, what is pried apart and/or relayed through the patho-logy of a body's doings in the pedagogic encounter with a world's shimmerings.

Encounters

It is no coincidence that we begin the last essay of this book, an interview with Lawrence Grossberg, by asking him to reflect upon his first encounters with affect. Grossberg's reply is, as one might expect from someone who has thought and written a great deal about affect for more than a quarter century, a guided tour through many of the major figures and attendant conceptual formations that have contributed tremendously to our present-day understandings of affect. Grossberg is especially good of course at highlighting affect's often tenuous and turbulent theoretical intersections with practices of cultural studies, always mapping out where affect has been and where it has yet to go. We the editors of this book first discovered affect—and its place in cultural studies in particular—through Grossberg's work, and then through those who influenced him (such as Spinoza, Freud, Williams, Deleuze, and so on) and those who followed later (particularly Probyn, Massumi, Sedgwick, and many among our contributors). When we met for the first time at a Michel de Certeau symposium organized by Ben Highmore in September 2002, it didn't take long to realize we shared an ongoing interest and investment in theories of affect. Now fragments of discussion and shimmers of inspiration caught over years of email contact have accumulated to produce something concrete.

Yet since our initial encounter, and the enthusiasms subsequently shared, the fate of affect as a fashionable theory has played on our minds as it also

played out in public (or at least our main public: academia). From the moment the idea for this collection began, we have experienced everything from the exacerbation of colleagues who "never want to hear the word affect again" through to the opposite reaction of delight from those who anticipate this collection with a sigh of relief. For this latter group, given this somewhat ephemeral and ubiquitous thing called affect theory, perhaps a "reader" promises to offer an authoritative overview that could fill a pesky void in conceptual accumulation. Both of these reactions make us quite conscious of cultural theory's own temporality when, most of all, we would prefer that this collection took on a life that might be more untimely: unfurling, in unexpected ways, beyond its presumed moment, provoking some readers to delve even more deeply into the variegated histories and entangled orientations that continue to feed into the ever-emergent discourse of affect, perpetuating the "not yet" of affect's doing.

While we acknowledge the difficulty of avoiding trends in academic curiosity, the idea that desirable paradigms simply appear, ostensibly from nowhere, traveling and propagating across continents in accordance with numbers of international conference delegates, is as naïve as the belief that any single book will help someone resolve a perceived deficit in their cultural theory capital. Still, throughout the writing and editing of this collection we have wondered and worried whether we too are guilty of exploiting an all too common scenario in the powerful transnational economy of global theory (see Morris 2006). At a time when various utilitarian agendas appear paramount in academic publishing, we will be pleased if the book intensifies appreciation for the delight and desirability of thought and feeling (and investigations of the relationship between both) as endpoints for intellectual practice in themselves. Leaving aside the theoreticist drive to master yet another canon of work (and the internecine battles that do sometimes emerge between different standpoints presented by the affect theorists here), we hope this collection manages to convey—more than once—the contagiousness of one or other of Tomkins's two positive affects: whether enjoyment-joy at the prospect of an undiscovered set of connections, or interest-excitement in the unveiling of an entirely fresh perspective. Without these moments of revelation and reflection—without breaks in the consumption and reproduction of established ideas to really imagine—theory itself begins to feel intractable, a stifling orthodoxy that has more in common with another Tomkinsesque pairing: fear or shame of not reproducing a norm.

In this introduction we have tried to give some sense of the wide range of theoretical possibilities and subtleties that an awareness of affect enables, letting the reader decide which threads ultimately prove the most productive. In this same manner, we think it fitting to conclude by offering two brief vignettes, each relaying our initiating encounters with affect and theories of affect while also giving some sense of the contours that have followed. With their slightly different trajectories, these anecdotes reveal for us the generative nature that circulates about the concept of affect, but also the "hap" or contingencies that color our unique perspectives. As Morris has shown (2006, 21–22), anecdotes need not be true in order to function in a communicative exchange; still, what we write below are truthful *enough* representations of our recollections of encountering affect. They are offered in the spirit of materializing and capturing the path that affect theory has taken within and around our own scholarly development: the angle of arrival, the feel of an atmosphere. It is also to show that no one "moment" or key "theorist" inaugurated "a" "turn" "to" affect; like others, we have been caught and enamored of affect *in turns*, in conjunction with new quotidian realities.

Greg

I first met affect, as a concept, when a manila envelope arrived at my apartment's doorstep in rural northwestern Pennsylvania sometime in 1984. At the time, I was working as a sound engineer in a music recording studio. The envelope was mailed to me by a college friend, a bit older than me, who had gone off to graduate school. It contained an essay (I still remember it, quite vividly, as badly photocopied and then unevenly chopped by a paper cutter) entitled "Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life," by Lawrence Grossberg (1984). The piece was written in a vibrant but rather unwieldy theoretical language that detailed this passionate thing called "affect" in ways that I could not always quite follow, although fortunately the musical references were immediately recognizable and that helped me to roughly intuit the theory. While I puzzled over Grossberg's rendering of particular musical artists and genres, something about the theory must have leaped up from those pages and struck me, stuck with me . . . because by the fall of 1985 I had quit my day job as an engineer and my evening/weekend job as a clerk at an independent record store. I too was off to graduate school.

But it was a second essay by Grossberg, "Is There Rock after Punk?"

published in the journal *Critical Studies in Communication* (1986), that truly caused me to take seriously the whole matter of affect and cultural studies. Grossberg's multilayered approach to popular music and fandom enlarged the ways that I had previously understood my own relationship to music (connecting it with broader movements afoot in culture) and, again, the concept of "affect" was crucial, even if I still couldn't quite fully comprehend all of its ins and outs. But the lure that really cinched everything for me was dangled by the American music writer Greil Marcus in a critical response that immediately followed Grossberg's piece (1986). There is one paragraph from Marcus in particular that has never left me and has remained a major touchstone for my subsequent work.

Marcus's response revolves, in part, around an anecdote concerning Henri Lefebvre (a social theorist and philosopher of everyday life) in France of the 1920s. In Marcus's retelling, Lefebvre is hounded on the streets of Paris by a playfully incensed Tristan Tzara, who is angry because Lefebvre, in his review of Tzara's *7 Manifestes Dada*, dared to write that "Dada has smashed the world, but the pieces are fine." Apparently for days after, Tzara would stop Lefebvre on the street to taunt him: "So! You're picking up the pieces! Are you going to put them back together?" Finally, Lefebvre replied: "No, I'm going to finish smashing them." There is a vibrancy to this short anecdote (and a mini-lesson about the role of critique) but, even more, I appreciated how Marcus uses it to bridge the writerly contents of his critical reflections. Marcus describes how Lefebvre

> argued that social theorists had to examine not just institutions but moments—moments of love, poetry, justice, resignation, hate, desire—and he insisted that within the mysterious but actual realm of everyday life (not one's job, but in one's life as a commuter to one's job, or in one's life as daydreamer during the commute) these moments were at once all-powerful and powerless. If recognized, they could form the basis for entirely new demands on the social order, because the thoughts one thought as one commuted to one's job were satisfied neither by systems of transportation nor by systems of compensation. The rub was that no one knew how to talk about such moments. (79)

These are sentences that I have never been able to let go, or allow them to let me go. Through Lefebvre, Marcus lays down what I took to be a challenge for affect theory and, in many ways, I have always understood it as cultural studies' challenge as well.

A few years later in the early 1990s, when I attended the University of Illinois to work on my Ph.D. and study with Lawrence Grossberg, I began to finally find my way toward addressing such affective moments. I discovered the ways that Grossberg sought to locate the movements of affect within what he called "mattering maps" and, thus, the ways that affect must always be articulated and contextualized. But I also came to notice how affect always points to a future that is not quite in view from the present, a future that scrambles any map in advance of its arrival, if indeed the moment (as a demand on the social) ever fully arrives. Or, perhaps it is that even if "the moment" never fully arrives, it nonetheless remains, as Grossberg details in our interview, *virtually* present in duration. Whatever the futures of affect theory might portend, it always and already calls for a critical practice—what Lefebvre called "a theory of moments"—that must seek to imaginatively/generatively nudge these moments along (or sometimes smash them) because they quite often reside along the "cusp of semantic availability" (as Raymond Williams would say of his concept of "structure of feeling" [1977, 134]), frequently revealing themselves in the clumsiness of bodily adjustments and in worldly accommodations barely underway. That is, these affective moments—at once all-powerful and powerless—do not arise in order to be deciphered or decoded or delineated but, rather, must be nurtured (often smuggled in or, at other times, through the direct application of pressure) into lived practices of the everyday as perpetually finer-grained postures for collective inhabitation. These matters—the shimmering relays between the everyday and affect and how these come to constitute ever new and enlarged potentials for belonging—remain my prime focus. Indeed, I have never really tried to imagine cultural studies as being about anything else.

Melissa

Punk rock was also key in my decision to go to grad school, but for me it was less a case of wanting to theorize music's place in everyday life than to escape a string of heartbreaks at the hands of a succession of bass players and drummers in a very small scene in Hobart, Tasmania. When I moved from an isolated island capital to the home of the millennial Olympics and gay pride, my intellectual coming of age was fostered by the inspiring work of local feminist scholars including Elspeth Probyn, Linnell Secomb, Gail Mason, Catherine Driscoll, Anna Gibbs, Katrina Schlunke, Ien Ang, Ruth Barcan, Kath Albury, Natalya Lusty, Catharine Lumby, Elizabeth Wilson,

Melissa Hardie, Laleen Jayamanne, and Zoe Sofoulis, among others. As I was soaking up the history of British cultural studies in the beginning stages of my thesis, Elspeth and Anna were sharing the ideas of Silvan Tomkins, intrigued like so many others by Eve Sedgwick's and Adam Frank's influential essay of 1995, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold." As their respective projects developed, these discoveries were passed on to students and colleagues in a range of courses and seminars over the years; my challenge was to bring these seemingly unrelated bodies of theory together.

At the time, I hardly grasped the problems Sedgwick in particular was responding to: the consequences for thought posed by cherished theoretical mantras, especially in the competitive and privileged environment of Ivy League American graduate schools. She seemed to suggest that theoretical proficiency was useful for students seeking a tenure-track position or a stimulating dinner party conversation but less so for understanding the disturbing realities of the wider culture. As she wrote in *Touching Feeling*,

> I daily encounter graduate students who are dab hands at unveiling the hidden historical violences that underlie a secular, universalist liberal humanism. Yet these students' sentient years, unlike the formative years of their teachers, have been spent entirely in a xenophobic Reagan-Bush-Clinton-Bush America where "liberal" is, if anything, a taboo category and where "secular humanism" is routinely treated as a marginal religious sect, while a vast majority of the population claims to engage in direct intercourse with multiple invisible entities such as angels, Satan, and God. (2003, 139–40)

Sedgwick questioned the prolonged deployment of outdated hermeneutics, and even if I hadn't yet mastered them myself, her readings of Tomkins (along with the work of Tomkins himself) were incredibly enabling for a graduate student suspicious of the political nihilism that seemed inherent to successful scholarly practice and the defeatism accompanying the corporatization of higher education in her country. Unlike Sedgwick's students', my sentient years coincided with twelve years of conservative government under one leader—John Howard—and yet as Bertelsen's and Murphie's essay elucidates, it was a similar capacity to fan xenophobia that had secured his initial election at the start of my university life.

These experiences were central to the final form taken by my Ph.D. dissertation and subsequent book, *Cultural Studies' Affective Voices* (2006). In their unflagging optimism, each iteration sought to challenge the pessimism of available visions of leftist politics in cultural studies in a consciously performative way, taking inspiration from those (like Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Meaghan Morris, Lawrence Grossberg, and Andrew Ross) who had previously done so. Yet since this time, a growing awareness of the singularity of my critical formation makes me conscious that affect theory has now perhaps also joined the privileged circuits of graduate education and indoctrination that were key to Sedgwick's earlier critique.

In any case, my move to Queensland for postdoctoral study and the chance to meet Sedgwick herself while writing my book in 2004 led my interest in affect in new directions. It wasn't just the impact of watching Sedgwick teach in the classroom, guiding and inviting thoughts from her own graduate students, in a voice so delightfully modest I could hardly believe it had the same origin as the biting polemics I'd treasured in her written arguments. It had as much to do with her cancellation of a second lunch date for an important doctor's appointment that hastened my change in perspective. A sudden confrontation with the fragility of the body that contained that powerful mind put matters of theoretical nuance, disciplinary politics, and career advice beyond any realm of relevance.

Maybe this was a gap in age and experience that was always going to be corrected: a fresh-faced researcher eagerly navigating the streets of Manhattan to find a hero only too accustomed to the inflated and unrelenting expectations of acolytes. Indeed, upon her reading my work prior to our meeting, it was all of the negative and indifferent aspects of scholarly life—of writing and the living that intruded upon it—that Sedgwick had found missing, whether the fear of writer's block, the ferocity of colleagues, the vicissitudes of motivation, or the paralysis that might be overcome if confidence returned. I should have realized that Sedgwick's work has been just as significant for demonstrating affect's place in *disabling* as much as accompanying intellectual practice, whether in her explorations of Melanie Klein (2007), her public battle with illness (as witnessed in the haunting "A Dialogue on Love" [1998]), or her commitment to friends whose experience of a cruel disease robbed them of further encounters in this life.[5] In her generous way, Sedgwick showed that my desire to make a positive to fit a pre-established political objective had left my vision blinkered, even though this was a condition I had regularly diagnosed in others.

In the years since our conversation I've become more sensitive to the range of factors effectively limiting the likelihood of *positive* "scholarly affect." This includes a higher education environment in which senior col-

leagues are constantly outraged at the neoliberal accounting procedures that have infiltrated teaching and research, yet so convinced of the futility of any efforts to resist that the sense of mourning and loss is pervasive. Meanwhile, for the younger generation moving through, the corporate university culture consecrates a kind of compulsory conviviality in the workplace (discussed in my essay)—from the smiley faces of office email to the team-building exercises of after work drinks—which defines the landscape of affective labor in the information economy. This incitement to friendship papers over the grim competitiveness of the job market, blurring the line between "friend," "colleague," and "contact." Such instances of gung-ho positivity and careerist collegiality are perhaps most explicit in the proliferating genre of Internet-based social networking sites that so many of us (and our students) use. Today's white collar workers while away hours logged on to the network, craving the benefits of these various demonstrations of presence, community, and connection. "Mood indicators" and "status updates" kindly invite us to describe how we *feel*; and yet the software itself remains dubiously positioned to change any of the broader conditions leading to the more chronic forms of expression, which swing violently from "rolling on the floor laughing" to illusions of murdering a co-worker in the adjoining cubicle for the most trivial of habits. On these sites, entrepreneurial selves busily amass a security blanket of online contacts to alleviate the pressures of an aestheticized work culture consisting of long hours and an unknown employment future. It is this new frontier for affective labor that Alan Liu (2004) terms the "eternal, inescapable friendship" of knowledge work. And it is a world that cultural theory is better equipped to navigate than most.

For if it is clear that this networked world without enemies cannot really ease the loneliness of the office cubicle or writer's garret, affect theory may help us fight the limited range of subjective states available in the contemporary workplace, and in doing so, help us identify and denounce the distribution of winners and losers in contemporary society. Then again, as many of the essays in this collection prompt us to wonder, there may be little benefit in simply developing a vocabulary to explain exploitation *better*. How does our own attraction to affect theory allow us to feel more or less hopeful, powerful, or vindicated than others?

This is the point at which we would want to mark a limit for theory's usefulness, and offer these essays as incitements to *more than* discourse. We want them to touch, to move, to mobilize readers. Rather than offering mere words, we want them to show what affect can *do*. Subsequent pages offer just

a sample of how some of our leading writers register these possibilities, at this moment. For now, we hope they carry intensities and resonances that impinge well beyond the printed page, and this passing conjuncture.

Notes

1 John Law's *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* is a more than worthy and messy methodological text for what we have in mind here (2004).

2 Sianne Ngai's discussion, in the introduction to her *Ugly Feelings*, of Paolo Virno's "neutral kernel" of affective attitudes and dispositions (2005, 4–5) is immediately applicable here, as is her slightly later discussion of stalled or suspended "moments of conspicuous activity [that] remain affectively charged" (14).

3 We are thinking here especially of the middle chapters in Agamben's *The Open* (2004, 39–70) on Jakob von Uexküll, Martin Heidegger, and the Rostock tick.

4 We are following here Lauren Berlant's essay "Love, a Queer Feeling" (2001). She argues that we might think "about love's form not only as norm and institution, but also as an index of duration." Berlant writes, "I think of it as a kind of tattoo, a rhythm, a shape, timing. An environment of touch or sound that you make so that there is something to which you turn and return. Thinking about these qualities of love can tell us something else more general, more neutral or impersonal, about intimacy . . ." (439). See also Seigworth on indices of duration such as activation contours and affective attunements (2003, 75–105).

5 The writing of Sedgwick and Lauren Berlant has done much to teach me about the many queer world-making efforts cut short by the AIDS crisis in the United States, especially under the Reagan administration. I can only endorse Ann Cvetkovich's (2007, 461) claim that the archive of queer AIDS activism is "a repository of grief and optimism" that should be cherished and promoted, particularly for subsequent generations. For a U.S.-Australian perspective on the AIDS crisis, see Michaels 1997.